



**Liz Gustafson, MSW**  
State Director  
Pro-Choice Connecticut  
**Testimony for Public Hearing**  
Human Services Committee  
**February 14, 2023**

H.B. 6616, An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status.

Dear Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, Senator Seminara, Representative Case, and esteemed members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Liz Gustafson, and I am the State Director of Pro-Choice Connecticut. Thank you for accepting this **testimony in strong support of H.B. 6616 An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status.**

Pro-Choice Connecticut believes that healthcare is a human right, and everyone deserves access to high-quality, affordable healthcare regardless of their age, race, gender identity, sexuality, zip code, immigration or economic status. We believe in a future where individuals and families can thrive in safe and healthy communities, and we are grateful for the Connecticut General Assembly's work in recent years to increase HUSKY access for young children, as well as pregnant and postpartum adults. The ability to care for ourselves and provide a better life for our families should not be dependent on immigration status, and **it is imperative that we continue to act on behalf of health equity by increasing access to HUSKY for all immigrants up to age 26.**

Our current healthcare and immigration systems were built on decades of racism and white supremacy, leading to insurmountable barriers faced by millions of people when trying to obtain coverage and care- based solely on their immigration status. Research by the Guttmacher Institute has found that insurance coverage gaps continue to grow, and immigrants aged 15 to 49 who were noncitizens had three times the uninsured rate of U.S.-born people or naturalized citizens<sup>1</sup>. While our state recently took steps towards expanding HUSKY, 58% of the roughly 113,000 undocumented immigrants in Connecticut still do not have any form of health insurance coverage<sup>2</sup>, which underscores the importance of ensuring no one is left behind when implementing policies that expand access to healthcare.

Exclusion from coverage harms everyone's health, and our state has the responsibility to ensure every resident regardless of age and immigration status can exercise their basic right to protect their health, their families' health, and their economic well-being. Early treatment effectively reduces the amount an individual will pay for healthcare in the long term, and as taxpayers who fund state health programs, immigrant communities deserve an equal and fair opportunity to access the very programs they pay for. Furthermore, insurance coverage is even more critical as we continue to navigate the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as people are now seeking care in an overburdened healthcare system in unprecedented circumstances.

When we are able to access the coverage and care we need, **we build communities in which we can all**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2021/04/uninsured-rate-people-reproductive-age-ticked-between-2016-and-2019>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/CT>

**participate with dignity.** Expanding access to quality, affordable healthcare coverage is imperative to our efforts on behalf of reproductive freedom, and requires ongoing action from policymakers. Our work does not end with expanding access up to age 26. In the long term, we need to ensure that immigrants of all ages are able access the coverage and the healthcare they need. The state of Connecticut must create a long term plan to expand HUSKY access to our whole immigrant community.

The courageous testimony provided in previous public hearings and in support of H.B. 6616 reaffirms that our state's immigrant residents and their families cannot wait- and storytelling is a powerful tool for change. Over recent years, there has been consistent public support for this measure, as **57% of Connecticut voters support expanding HUSKY** to all undocumented immigrants<sup>3</sup>.

H.B. 6616 would be an investment in healthcare for immigrant communities, and an investment in the future of Connecticut. Pro-Choice Connecticut urges the committee and the legislature to support H.B. 6616 in its current form, which would expand HUSKY access to age 26.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Liz Gustafson  
State Director  
Pro-Choice Connecticut

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<sup>3</sup> <https://universalhealthct.org/application/files/4016/5774/2108/Presentation.Short.UHCT.f.2022.07.07.pdf>